



## **Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks**

54078 US Hwy 2 West  
Glasgow, MT 59230

November 16, 2012

Governor's Office – Sheena Wilson  
Montana State Library, Helena  
Montana Department of Environmental Quality  
Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks  
    Director's Office  
    Fish and Wildlife Division  
    Lands Section  
    Parks Division  
    Commission Secretary  
    Legal Unit  
Montana DNRC Northeastern Land Office  
Environmental Quality Council  
MT Environmental Information Center  
State Historic Preservation Office  
Hill County Commissioners

Clay Vincent, Hill County Planner  
A.T. Stafne, MFWP Commissioner  
Representative Kris Hansen  
David Aageson  
BFW Land Company  
Donna Greytak  
Arnold Hall  
Healy Family, LP  
James Hirst  
Lee and Roxanne Laeupple  
John Schaller  
Steve and Wanda McIntosh  
Evelyn Wanke  
Trevor Wolery  
Mark Aageson

Dear Interested Party:

You recently received documents relating to the proposed action of Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (MFWP) purchasing 2,992 acres of property for a Wildlife Management Area located approximately 42 miles northwest of Havre. The property is located along the Milk River and consists primarily of Milk River riparian habitats and associated uplands.

The primary purpose of this proposal is to conserve and enhance native areas that provide important habitat for game and nongame species and to provide additional recreational opportunities for the general public. This habitat provides critical winter range for big game species and the Milk River serves as a migratory corridor for many species. Protecting and enhancing the existing habitat is expected to increase use by game animals, including mule deer, elk, white-tailed deer, antelope, pheasants, sharp-tailed grouse, and waterfowl along with a variety of native nongame species of birds, fish, reptiles, amphibians, and small mammals.

Through the public comment effort that ran from October 17 through November 9, 2012 and the public hearing that was held, written or verbal comments were received from 61 individuals, organizations or agencies. The majority of the comments that were received supported the proposal (33), 27 comments were opposed to the project and one comment was neither for nor against the proposal.

Based on the comments gathered from the public review period, some slight modifications were made to the draft EA document and are found in the Final EA. The Final EA is available upon request by contacting the Havre Area Office at 265-6177 or on the FWP website at <http://fwop.mt.gov/publicNotices>.

Although many potential issues were raised during the comment period, they are all addressed in the Decision Notice with additional explanation. Several concerns were not within the authority of MFWP to address. Based on the quality of fish and wildlife habitat and public access benefits, as well as, a majority of public support for the project, it is my recommendation through the attached Decision Notice to purchase the Milk River Ranch WMA, subject to approval by the MFWP Commission and the State Land Board.

The Commission will be asked to approve the purchase of this easement on a conference call scheduled for 9:00 AM on December 10, 2012. The public will be afforded an opportunity to listen to and provide comment during the conference call at all Regional Headquarters and at the Great Northern Inn in Havre, Montana. If you have any further questions regarding this proposal, please contact Scott Hemmer at the Havre Area Office at 265-6177.

Thank you very much for your interest in this project.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Patrick Gunderson", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Patrick Gunderson  
Region Six Supervisor